



Delegation of Canada  
to the OSCE

Délégation du Canada  
auprès de l'OSCE

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR  
ON GENDER EQUALITY AND  
THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE  
ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
1346<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
NOVEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**

Madam Chairperson,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, Norway, Switzerland, and Canada.

Today we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence. This day is critical in understanding the magnitude of the endemic violence we are addressing. One in three women and girls experience violence in their lifetime. Sexual and gender based violence occurs in every country across the globe; across all spheres of life: it takes place at home, in schools, on the streets, at work, online, and in refugee camps. And far too often violence against women and girls is normalized and goes unpunished.

Given its importance, we valued the timely opportunity to address violence against women and girls at the recently concluded Human Dimension Seminar in Warsaw. There, our delegations observed that two critical elements raised in all sessions were the threats and risk of online violence, and the importance of intersectionality in addressing violence faced by women and girls, given that women and girls often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that can compound and lead to violence. These two elements reinforced our view that the OSCE must effectively address the issue of online violence, as well as incorporate intersectionality into its approaches to combating violence against women and girls. Regarding the first element, online violence has serious, but often underestimated, real impacts on women and girls throughout the OSCE region. It affects their psychological and physical wellbeing, as well as their political, social, and cultural participation. It is critical that we, as OSCE participating States, recognize that sexual and gender-based violence in digital contexts is a pressing human rights issue, and to understand that the same rights women have offline must also be protected online. On the second element, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination contribute to increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, especially against women and girls. In order to make progress towards our goal of eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls we must not only recognize such forms of discrimination, like we did in the Milan Ministerial Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, but we must take steps to ensure that such recognition is followed through with concrete action.

Madam Chairperson,

Violence against women and girls, including harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) and female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) is a violation of women and girls' human rights. It is a barrier to the achievement of gender equality, including to economic empowerment, political engagement, development, and peace and security. In this context, we would take this opportunity to thank the Swedish Chairpersonship for making gender equality their monthly theme for November. We have found it to be particularly appropriate as we approach the conclusion of our Ministerial Council negotiations. In these negotiations our delegations have advocated forcefully for the importance of incorporating gender equality in all texts where it pertains. We do this because gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, in all their diversity, and the promotion and protection of their human rights are key to upholding our OSCE commitments and achieving comprehensive security.

Thank you.